Mint of the United States
Phila. June 7. 1837

Dear Sir —

In a late letter I requested you to inform me of the weight and legal value and material of that part of the French Coinage which corresponds to our Cents and half cents and also whether counterfeits thereof are thrown into circulation to any injurious extent. Please state also particularly the amount for which those coins are a legal tender. I will thank you likewise to ascertain whether the small denominations of silver coins are found to be convenient in the Retail trade to any sensible amount and whether any legal impediments are interposed for the purpose of preventing this. On the above points you will please enquire early and inform me as soon as you have data to be relied on.

Should no information very likely be required it is rendered probable that a larger fee may be required for your commission to full satisfaction at Paris in regard to the proofs of gold and silver pieces than you will consider it discreet to give without further advice. Should this be the case you will nevertheless be very usefully employed during the interval in investigating the method of preparing those pieces in the usual way with other collateral enquiries until a more propitious opportunity may arise for prosecuting the former object. Herewith you will receive two letters from Mr James Dickson Engr. one to Mr. Marbois and the other to Mr. Charles Mackay Nephew & successor I believe to the late distinguished gentleman of that name who had charge of the Melting & Refining department of that institution. Mr. Dickson with whom I have become acquainted within the last two years was for some time in the British Mint a pupil of Mr Mackay last mentioned. This circumstance together with the influence to which he is well entitled by his personal character and various attainments renders it probable that these letters will greatly promote the success of your enquiries in London should they be deposited by any cause in Paris. A copy of Mr. Dickson's note to me accompanying the above mentioned letters is also enclosed herewith as furnishing some additional aspects favorable to his influence in the case. The attention which my acquaintance with Mr. Dickson had early impressed me, rendered it a pleasure to give him letters on the occasion of his visiting the southern States by which his views there were probably in some degree promoted

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his good wishes in regard to the success of the enquiries confided to you may be relied on therefore both from this consideration and from his highly liberal spirit.

I have now to add that it has been mentioned to me that the process of gold and silver parting by the sulphuric acid has been introduced into the Mint of Russia in the most approved manner, that permission to examine the process was and it is supposed still is freely accorded. This intimation is from Mr Dickson. It is probable therefore that by the packet of the 1st July I may advise you to proceed to St. Petersburgh unless it should be ascertained that this liberality is no longer extended in regard to which information it is presumed may be had from the Persian Minister through the intervention of Mr Livingston whose readiness to promote the objects in view has already been promptly evinced.

If the journey to Persia be decided on it should be accomplished in time to return to London or Paris before winter. In a few days I expect to have a communication at Washington with the Secretary of the Treasury Mr Duane on these subjects. The Secretary of State, Mr Mc Lane, whose friendly aid will also be useful to your visit to Petersburgh if the [redacted] be deemed advisable by letter to our Minister there Mr Richardson, if that measure should [redacted] be deemed advisable. This will of course [redacted] be in a great degree contingent on the character of the facilities for effecting the desired objects in Paris & London, in regard to which you will, before the rect of my letter by the 1st July Packet, have obtained, probably, ample information. Whether to the obtaining this, effectually as [redacted] to London, may under [redacted] expedient a prompt visit to that place on receiving this communication, must be left to your sound discretion.

The facilities for visiting Petersburgh I understand are very frequent and to the additional expense will it is presumed grow only by this means. It is probable however that I shall add to your means by a draft accompanying my letter by the packet alluded to.

Mr Dickson it appears from his letter to Mr Mathison, is under the impression that the process of gold and silver parting by the sulphuric acid if introduced into the Mint [redacted] will be limited to this institution. This is highly probable but it can not be a condition on which any information is to be had in regard to the actual improvements in this process abroad. You will therefore in general terms state this to Mr Mathison if you perceive that such a consideration is regarded as the basis of any information he may communicate.

Very respectfully
Yours &c
Wm. Wirt

Hon. Peter Porter.
Secy of War
Washington City

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To

J. Rives Esqr.

Paris

June 7th. 1833

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THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF THE UNITED STATES

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